2016 discharge: Bio-based Industries Joint Undertaking - BBI Joint Undertaking

2017/2183(DEC) - 22/03/2018 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Brian HAYES (EPP, IE) on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the bio-based industries (BBI) Joint Undertaking for the financial year 2016.

The committee called on the European Parliament to **grant the joint undertaking's Executive Director discharge** in respect of the implementation of the joint undertaking's budget for the financial year 2016.

Noting that the Court of Auditors issued a statement of assurance as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions for the financial year 2016, Members called on Parliament to **approve the closure of the joint undertaking's accounts**.

They made, however, a number of recommendations that need to be taken into account when the discharge is granted. They may be summarised as follows:

General: Members noted that the maximum Union contribution to the activities of the Joint Undertaking is EUR 975 000 000, to be paid from Horizon 2020. The industry members of the Joint Undertaking are to contribute resources of at least EUR 2 730 000 000 over the period of the Joint Undertaking, consisting of at least EUR 975 000 000 of in-kind and cash contributions to the Joint Undertaking's operational activities and at least EUR 1 755 000 000 of in-kind contributions to the Joint Undertaking's additional activities.

They noted that 29 out of 65 retained proposals from Call 2016 were at the grant agreement preparation stage by the end of 2016. By early 2017, the Joint Undertaking programme will have a portfolio of 65 ongoing projects with a total of 729 participants from 30 countries with a total grant value of EUR 414 000 000.

Budget and financial management: the Joint Undertaking's annual accounts provide that the final 2016 budget is to be available for implementation and include commitment appropriations of EUR 194 295 870 and payment appropriations of EUR 67 196 187, the utilisation rates for commitment and payment appropriations of which were 97,1 % and 95,8 %, respectively.

Members expressed some concern that several industry members participating in Joint Undertaking's projects could not report their in-kind contributions by the given deadline, either because their own 2016 accounts were not yet closed, or because the projects had started close to the end of 2016.

They regretted that, by the end of 2016, the total contribution from the industry members amounted to EUR 313 200 000, compared to the Union's cash contribution of EUR 65 000 000 which stems from the fact that the industry members had already declared a significant amount of in-kind contributions to additional activities compared to the Union's input.

Other observations: the report also contained a series of observations on procurement and recruitment procedures, the legal framework and the prevention and management of conflicts of interests.

By the end of 2016, the Joint Undertaking's staff was almost complete, with 20 posts filled out of a total of 22 posts allocated to the Joint Undertaking by the staff establishment plan. Members welcomed the fact

that the target set in the 2016 annual work programme was fully achieved, with the recruitment of 13 temporary agents and 8 contract agents coming from 10 Members States.

Members noted with appreciation that in 2016 the human resources function continued to strengthen the legal framework paying particular attention to the application of the implementing rules of the Commission to the Joint Undertaking. They welcomed the fact that, in that respect, nine new implementing rules have been adopted by the governing board in 2016.